CHICAGO RESIDENCE DRAWER 2 MTL- LATER YEARS

Mary Todd Lincoln

Chicago Residence

Excerpts from newspapers and other sources

From the files of the

Lincoln Financial Foundation Collection

71.2009.085.04433

When Chicago Was Young:

Letters of early settler tell of Chicago.

By Herma Clark

One of the delights of conducting such a column as ours is receiving letters from readers who find items of interest in family archives. This week we are surrendering a good deal of our space to extracts from letters sent us by Oliver Everett of De Kalb, Ill., these being written to Mr. Everett's grandfather, Dr. Oliver Everett [first living at Cummington, Mass., and later at Dixon's Ferry, now called Dixon, Ill.]. The writer of the letters quoted was Rufus Everett of Princeton, Ill. Note the references to Chicago in 1835. The spelling in the old letters is preserved.

From Rufus Everett, at Princeton, Ill., to Dr. Oliver Everett, at Cummington, Mass., dated Aug. 23, 1835.

"Smith" [their brother, James Smith Everett] "got along here about the first of June. He had a very bad time in coming, owing to the heavy rains. Col. Bryant arrived here about the 20th of June and I believe is tolerably pleased with the country. Illinois for farming, I think, stands unrivaled. Chicago is a very flourishing town. They have a pretty place for a town and with some expense a tolerable good harbor. The country immediately west of Chicago is rather low and wet for 8 or 10 miles and principally prairie. It is said that there were five hundred dwelling houses and stores put up there last season. When I was there last spring lots that were selling for $1,000 are now selling for $5,000 and $6,000."

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From Rufus Everett at Princeton, Ill., to Dr. Oliver Everett, at Dixon's Ferry, dated Jan. 23, 1837.

"They had a grand housewarming at Smith's the other night. Nearly all the young people on the prairie were there. Poet Bill [William Cullen Bryant] was in uncommon good spirits."

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From Rufus Everett, at Princeton, Ill., to Dr. Oliver Everett, at Dixon's Ferry, Ill.

"Princeton, Putnam County, February 20, 1837.

"Dear Brother:

"Speculation runs high as ever in these parts, although they have no very favorable news from Vandalia relative to the division of Putnam County. Lots in town have risen greatly since I came down. Cyrus [Bryant] has sold twenty acres of the east end of his place for $25 an acre, and ten acres from the other forty that he sold has since been sold for $30 an acre. A pretty high price for unimproved prairie. The people in this settlement have had a grand frolic lately. They held it at the Langworthys'. The Dominy preached and talked so much against social parties, sleigh-riding, etc., that it was thought best to get up a dance so that he might have some occasion, or at least some little excuse for a most unmerciful Sabbath Day whiping.

"To-day all hands went to the meeting expecting to take without mercy. But contrary to all expectations, he never said a word about it. I think the fellow knew they wanted a whiping and was determined not to gratify them. His being so contrary is quite a disappointment to many. They may get it yet. It is possible that he is only mustering his forces and ammunition to renew the attact with redoubled fury. The party was very respectable as to numbers and characters. There was something said at one of the meetings that very much offended Newman, one of the traders in this place. He is about setting up a grog-shop close to the meeting house. He has the frame ready to go up and says that he will have liquors there in a week. Arthur Bryant is teaching singing in this place. He has a pretty large school."

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A charming letter from Mrs. Edwin B. Harts, Chicago, tells of the complex nature of a summer exodus to Mackinac in the eighties. It was a delightful trip of two days and two nights.

"Believe me," writes Mrs. Harts, "when I say that no trip to Europe took more thought and preparation. Family dog, horses, cow, feed, coachman, maids, all went along. When one mentions the cow, modern friends gasp: 'What! Not a cow?' Well, what was to he done with that useful animal? Store her, until our return."

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"The L. L. McArthur family was another that did about the same things. They always went to Mackinac, though not quite so far back.

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"I have not seen the old Mission Tabernacle [Morgan and Indiana streets] mentioned. Few are left who remember that, except Mrs. Martin Foss, mother of Mrs. Thomas E. Wilson. The old church still stands. Abraham Lincoln's two little boys attended this Sunday school and were in my father's class. The latter was Superintendent for twenty years."

Mrs. Harts also tells us that she has a picture of Lincoln sent her father by Mrs. Lincoln, in token of her gratitude for his goodness to her little boys, his Sunday school pupils, in the old Tabernacle Church.

A CHICAGO QUIZ.

1. What is the motto on Chicago's seal? [This may be seen on the floor at the Washington street entrance of the public library.]

2. Who was mayor of Chicago at the time of the fire of 1871?

3. What wide street on the west side was named for a Kentucky statesman's home, and why?

4. **True or false?**

[a] Abraham Lincoln's body lay in state in Chicago in May, 1865.

[b] Gen. Grant visited Chicago in November, 1879, on his return from a trip around the world.

[c] LaFayette set foot on Chicago soil when he visited America in 1825.

[d] As prince of Wales, King Edward VII. of England visited Chicago in 1860.

5 In what year were Roman Catholic services first held in Chicago?

[Answers next week.]

Send stories of early Chicago to Herma Clark, THE TRIBUNE.

The Tragic Story of Mrs. Lincoln.

(Continued from preceding page.)

down to our office and consulted Lincoln himself about it. 'What did Mrs. Lincoln say?' inquired the latter. 'She consented to have it taken away.' 'Then, in God's name,' exclaimed Lincoln, 'cut it down to the roots.'"

Of all her sex with whom Lincoln has become acquainted, says J. H. Barrett, Mary Todd was undoubtedly the one best suited to win his admiration and a more tender regard. Aside from the dissimilarity in their earlier training and position, however, there was a considerable differences in their years, he being past 30 and she a little more than 20. At his age, an attachment of this sort is likely to be very earnest; at hers, the spirits more volatile, with any young tendency to coquetry yet undisciplined, and with maidenly ways sometimes provocative of resentment or despair in a sensitive lover. The lady was ambitious; dazzled by the glory of the great statesman to whom her father was a personal and political friend, her highest ideal of manhood was typified by the eloquent orator and expectant president.

She received attentions from two persons who took a leading part, on opposite sides, in the Harrison canvass—one tall and ungainly, yet amiable, modest, kind hearted already noted as a speaker and aspiring to a higher position than he had been given by the prolonged legislative service; the other, low in stature, but strong in energy and pluck, graceful in manner, bold, ready, and pleasing in speech, as ambitious as his rival, and deemed by his friends a more eloquent orator, though on what was to her the wrong side. She preferred the principles and habits of Lincoln to those of Douglas, as she avowed afterward, and if she was also influenced by ambition the political intuition—famous in later life—was not now at fault.

To a friend of her girlhood she wrote of her engagement, speaking plainly of the defects of her intended husband, in personal appearance especially, and adding: "But I mean to make him president of the United States. You will see, as I always told you, I will yet be the president's wife.

Grief of Last Years.

The nation had not yet started the practice of pensioning president's widows, and when the nature of Mrs. Lincoln's circumstances became known a public subscription was started in her behalf. Her state, in the first years of her widowhood, is thus described by a contemporary newspaper:

"Republics are proverbially ungrateful, but few people have been so situated to appreciate in its fullest sense the truth of this stale aphorism as the wife of him for whom the country went in mourning, and whose life was sacrificed through his devotion to its holiest ambition. When Abraham Lincoln perished from the wounds inflicted upon him by the bullet of the assassin the whole United States shed tears and draped itself in funeral garb. Men moved about with solemn and sorrowful tread and bore upon their faces the expression of the deepest grief. But all this was selfish; they felt that the country had sustained a loss, and in that they were aggrieved. None thought of the widow, left alone in the great house, over which the deep shadow of a sudden calamity had settled with a fearful presence. Days passed; she who in the pride and grandeur of a husband's love and preference had presided within these spacious halls left there in humble weeds, seeking a place where she might rest and pay the tribute of respectable retirement to her husband's greatness. It was to be expected that the men whom he had served and the party which had obtained the sacrifice of his life would place the widow and family of Abraham Lincoln beyond the reach of want; but the spirit of this party and their individual character were well shown in the opposition to the proposition to appropriate the paltry sum accruing to the deceased in right of the four years' term upon which he had entered. Mrs. Lincoln, indignant at this almost insult offered to the memory of her husband, left Washington and proceeded to his adopted state.

Buys House in Chicago.

Springfield, the former residence of Mr. Lincoln, had never been a favorite spot with her; consequently, a proposal to sell a house in Chicago, in a fitting locality, was eagerly accepted by her, and after a short interchange of ideas she became the possessor of a residence in the western metropolis. Great injustice has been done Mrs. Lincoln in supposing that her elevation to the White house found her unprepared for its duties and unfit for the assumption of the dignity appertaining to such a high office. This is certainly a mistake. Mrs. Lincoln stepped into the position certainly unexpectedly, but filled it with ease and grace, and throughout conducted herself in many trying situations with the dignity that could not be surpassed in one born to rule. It has been said of Mrs. Lincoln that she was extravagant, but this is but another of the calumnies uttered against the woman whose greatest fault perhaps was that she exerted her natural influence over her husband for the benefit of those who she thought were his friends. No doubt she received presents, but they came to her simply as expressions of courteous attention to the wife of the nation's chief.

Of the $110,000 sworn to as her husband's estate, but a small portion was within her control. First, there were certain liabilities to be relieved, and after that the portions accruing to the children were to be deducted from this amount, thus leaving her but a comparative small sum within her personal control.

She even felt necessary to dispose by sale of a number of personal articles—garments, jewels, etc.—in order to maintain herself with becoming dignity. In this, says the same account, she is but following the example of crowned heads, who thus get rid of their outre garments without exciting any curiosity or impertinent comment.

It is certainly belittling the country that this lady, to whom full justice has never been done because of the rivalry of politicians, should be compelled to appear as a mendicant before the American people. The widow of a deceased private soldier receives from the government a pension equal to one-half the pay of a soldier doing duty; then why should the widow of the commander in chief of the army and navy be left to the charity of the people for the means of maintaining a position becoming her antecedents and dignity?

Added to her financial difficulties, Mrs. Lincoln was called on while living in Chicago to bear the great grief of losing her son Thomas.

Mrs. Lincoln died at the residence of her sister, Mrs. Ninian W. Edwards, in Springfield, July 16, 1882. Dr. Thomas W. Dresser, her physician, says of her:

"She was bright and sparkling in conversation, and her memory remained singularly good up the close of her life. Her face was animated and pleasing; and to me she was always an interesting woman; and while the whole world was finding fault with her temper and disposition, it was clear to me that the trouble was really a cerebral disease."

Q—Can you find out for me where Mary Todd Lincoln lived in Chicago after President Lincoln was assassinated?
Jane Wyler, South Side

Mary Todd Lincoln

A—Mrs. Lincoln, immediately after her husband's death, lived in the Tremont House Hotel. At the time of his death, President Lincoln was making plans to purchase a home here on South Michigan Avenue. His widow wanted him buried in Chicago as she wanted to live here, but she reportedly was talked out of it by Lincoln's close associates. They chose Springfield. Mrs. Lincoln later moved with her two sons to Hyde Park, then a suburb. She lived in the Hyde Park Hotel on the lake. Subsequently, she chose what is now 1239 W. Washington Blvd. as her home. Her restlessness continued and she changed her residence to Florida, returning here in 1874. She attempted suicide and was for a little short of a year, committed to a mental institution. She died in 1882, one of her time's most pathetic figures.